



## TECHNICAL GUIDANCE NOTE

### *OP8 Landscape/Seascape approach (2024 –2028)*

#### 1. Purpose

This Technical Guidance note is intended to serve as a reference for SGP National Coordinators in preparing and/or updating their Country Programme Strategies (CPS) for Operational Phase OP8. Building on the experience of grant-making during OP6 and OP7, the note provides an introduction to the SGP landscape/seascape approach and related planning frameworks, conceptual models, results and indicators. It summarizes experience from initiatives already underway within the SGP portfolio from previous Operational Phases, and redirects SGP country teams to resource materials that will be useful in understanding, tailoring and/or refining the landscape/seascape approach.

#### 2. Background

During previous SGP operational phases, the mainstreaming of the landscape/seascape approach within SGP was designed to achieve greater impact and lead to synergies and opportunities for scaling up. Depending on the size and context of participating countries, as well as available funding for grant-making (i.e. CORE and/or STAR funds), SGP country programmes were invited to select one or more priority landscapes/ seascapes within which community projects would be supported. In the majority of SGP countries, an independent baseline assessment and participatory evaluation process for the target landscape/seascape was carried out with technical support from an external entity (such as a university research department) financed in the form of a grant.

Building on the results of an on-line survey carried out with SGP country teams in OP6, a participatory review of the implementation of the landscape/seascape approach was carried by an independent consultant in 2018. For the most part, SGP country teams reported that the landscape/seascape approach allowed SGP to better focus grant-making and promote strategic programming and clustering of small grants, with the aim of achieving landscape-scale impacts. In particular, the 70:30 ratio for grant allocations (i.e. 70% of resources to be dedicated to one or more selected landscapes/seascapes, and up to 30% for cross-cutting projects), was noted as a positive aspect of the strategic approach providing the National Steering Committees (NSCs) with flexibility in the design of the demand-driven CPS, as well as scope for adaptive management.

Through a number of global partnerships including [COMPACT](#), [COMDEKS](#) and the Global ICCA Support Initiative ([ICCA GSI](#)), adopting a focused landscape/seascape approach has generally assisted the SGP to enhance cost efficiencies and leverage new sources of funding. The benefits of this approach have included: (i) *ecological outcomes* working at a landscape scale to encompass ecosystems; (ii) *enhanced impact* by clustering of SGP projects, building stronger



linkages among them; (iii) *practical benefits* from a common CPS baseline assessment, including SGP projects located closer to one another allowing for more efficient monitoring and follow up; and (iv) *long-term potential* through increased sustainability, suited to the needs of mainstreaming, acceleration platforms for scaling up.

### 3. Objectives and Scope

As part of OP8, the SGP aims to promote and support innovative and scalable initiatives, and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships at the local level to tackle global environmental issues in priority landscapes and seascapes. As stated in the project framework, SGP will develop a coherent global strategic initiative on biodiversity and ecosystems. The OP8 biodiversity initiative will also be in line with the cross-cutting landscape/seascape approach involving projects which contribute to a suite of the relevant GEF focal areas (i.e. climate change mitigation, reducing land degradation, eliminating POPs, protecting international waters, as well as conserving and maintaining biodiversity).

Through its experience with landscape/seascape initiatives over multiple Operational Phases, SGP has piloted and refined a series of planning frameworks to help guide the strategic grant-giving, while providing the basis for future monitoring and evaluation. These have included preparing: (i) a *baseline assessment* as a 'snapshot' of the geographic priority areas, to serve as the basis for future monitoring and evaluation; (ii) *conceptual model* as a diagrammatic tool documenting site-level processes, threats and opportunities believed to impact biodiversity conservation in the area; and (iii) *site strategy* to provide a framework for the allocation of resources, implementation of SGP grants, and assessment of results.

As part of the continued adoption of the landscape/seascape approach during OP8, SGP will build upon and deepen its experience with landscape/seascape initiatives tested and refined in diverse regions and settings, including terrestrial and marine biomes. As a contribution to the [GEF7 strategic priorities](#), the OP8 landscape/seascape approach will be closely aligned with the relevant GEF priorities namely: integrating results across the portfolio of GEF focal areas, linking the priorities of the Rio Conventions with the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)), and addressing priority social inclusion needs and concerns.

### 4. Results measurement and alignment with GEF and larger frameworks (e.g. Rio conventions, SDGs)

During GEF8, attention will be placed on documenting the synergies of linking the priorities of the different Rio Conventions (i.e. CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD and Minamata Convention). In this vein, the OP8 landscape/seascape approach will be expected to link biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, food sovereignty, sustainable energy for all, land degradation neutrality, and community resilience to shocks and disasters. As exemplified by the ongoing UNFCCC deliberations within the auspices of the '[Global Landscapes Forum](#)', community-based work at landscape level can be a highly effective way of simultaneously meeting both sustainable development needs and conservation goals.



Taking a landscape approach is based on supporting indigenous and local communities in their stewardship of the landscape/seascape, and working with a broad array of stakeholders across a mosaic of land uses. SGP’s implementation of this approach will be based on linking small grants with capacity-building activities, exchanges and nurturing a network or ‘platform’ at landscape-level, and serving as an ‘incubator’ for funding new partnerships. The SGP will be expected to play a central role in assisting civil society coalitions and governments in meeting the CBD Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) for biodiversity conservation, in keeping with the relevant strategies for the GEF focal areas, such as the GEF-8 Biodiversity Strategy, to address the most critical drivers of ecosystem loss across entire landscapes and/or seascapes.

A number of important considerations have been identified during OP6 and OP7 as part of the SGP mainstreaming of the landscape/seascape approach across its target countries. These lessons have included how to: (i) *gauge the right scale* of a landscape/seascape intervention in relation to the envelope of available resources; (ii) *choose the target landscape(s)/seascape(s)* from among different candidate areas (with support from technical, academic and research partners); (iii) justify the objective and scientific criteria for a CPS geographic focus; (iv) identify and choose non-landscape/seascape-focused grant projects; and (v) develop a strategy for resource mobilization, including blended finance.

In line with the above lessons from OP6 and OP7, NSCs are expected to continue to apply a thoughtful and transparent process to select, review and/or update the OP8 priority landscape/seascape. As in past SGP Operational Phases, the first step in the process will be to assemble and update information including national plans and strategies, maps, and SGP documents as well as studies done by other organizations (refer to Table below):

<b>Rio Conventions + national planning frameworks</b>	<b>Date of ratification/completion</b>
UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)	
CBD National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP)	
Nagoya Protocol on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS)	
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)	
UNFCCC Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC)	
UNFCCC Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA)	
UNFCCC National Adaptation Plans of Action (NAPA)	
UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)	
UNCCD National Action Programmes (NAP)	
Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)	
SC National Implementation Plan (NIP)	
Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)	
GEF7 National Dialogue	
Strategic Action Programmes (SAPs) for shared IW-bodies <sup>1</sup>	
Minamata Convention on Mercury	
Others (list) as relevant	

<sup>1</sup> Please identify existing IW regional projects and the regional SAPs adopted by countries sharing international waterbodies so as to align SGP local interventions. Please check this website to find some of the SAPs: <http://iwlearn.net/publications/SAP>



In compiling the relevant planning frameworks and priorities, the NSC will be expected to review and delineate the approximate boundaries of the priority OP8 landscape/seascape according to key ecological, programmatic and operational criteria. It will need to decide on the best “niche” for small grants. Criteria and priorities for selection of the landscape(s)/seascape(s) for the NSC to consider may include: what can the SGP CPS do with the minimum level of OP8 CORE grant allocations? Are there other donors with whom to collaborate and co-finance? What is the potential for landscape/seascape linkages in order to combine resources? In line with the previous CPS guidance, further questions for OP8 may include:

1. Is there an area where SGP has laid a strong foundation during a previous Operational Phase (i.e. where it has supported numerous scalable projects)? If so, how will SGP build upon and expand on this work during OP8?
2. Is the area a [critical ecological hotspot](#) or key biodiversity area ([KBA](#)) where there are threatened species and ecosystems, high poverty index (with a SDG priority for the UNDP and other UN agencies) and/or low capacity of CSOs? Has this area been addressed by SGP in past Operational Phases?
3. Has there been a “rotation” of the CPS geographic focus of the SGP between different provinces, geographic areas, and/or thematic priorities over the course of successive SGP cycles? If so, how can this be strengthened and expanded?
4. Is there potential to continue, and/or expand, on a previous SGP-led initiative (i.e. such as under International Waters, COMPACT or COMDEKS portfolios)?
5. Do other large-scale efforts (i.e. Full-Size GEF Projects, and other UNDP projects) provide possibilities for partnerships and added resources?
6. What is the situation with regard to the [diversity, quality and vitality of governance](#) in the target OP8 land/seascape? Is the SGP in a position to nurture and support shared governance and multi-actor networks and platforms in the area?
7. In Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and other marine/coastal context, is it possible to combine both the landscape and seascape elements, for example in a [“ridge-to-reef”](#) (R2R) or International Waters approach?

## 5. Stakeholders, partners including private sector engagement

Continued work at landscape/seascape-level will present opportunities to identify allies and partners with whom to collaborate on the OP8 CPS. These strategic partnerships may support: (i) leveraging co-financing; (ii) implementing capacity-building activities; (iii) conducting South-South and Triangular cooperation exchanges; and (iv) influencing policy at local, national and regional levels. Forging partnerships related to a given OP8 landscape/seascape will require acting at different levels and being sensitive to the importance of including diverse stakeholders and governance institutions – for example, with traditional institutions at the community level, as well as national-level authorities.



In line with the partnership-based approach of the SGP at project, country programme, and global levels, potential partners during OP8 include: private foundations, academic institutions, and projects funded by other GEF agencies (i.e. as part of the multi-agency GEF8 Impact Programmes with “child” projects). International NGOs that are also GEF partners such as Conservation International, FAO, IUCN, and/or WWF might be tapped to help prepare ecosystem profiles for the target landscape. Additional resource mobilization with the UNDP Country Offices, using non-GEF sources of funds (i.e. bilateral donors, Green Climate Fund, Adaptation Fund, LDCF, and others) will also be explored.

## 6. Approach for sustainability and replication, gender mainstreaming

The participatory nature of SGP planning, management and monitoring is intrinsic to the landscape/seascape approach and will help to build community capacity, partnership platforms and social capital. Examples of these kinds of benefits may include:

- Enhancing people’s feeling of belonging to place and fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility, including recognition of diversity, quality and vitality of governance, leading to better social and landscape-scale conservation outcomes;
- Increasing participation of all groups in the governance of the landscape/seascape by offering equal opportunity to all (i.e. regardless of age, race, colour, ethnic origin, social origin, language, national extraction, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, religion, spiritual belief, culture, political opinion, marital or parental status, pregnancy, and/or disability);
- Strengthening institutional capacity for decentralized decision-making and local stewardship of natural resources at community and landscape-levels.

## 7. Risks management, knowledge management and innovation

The OP8 CPS for the target landscape/seascape will be based on an agreed [Theory of Change](#) (ToC), which visualizes a desired future scenario and develops a theory of how this might be achieved. By following a ToC planning framework, the NSC can move through the steps in developing the landscape/seascape priority by: (i) analyzing the context of the proposed priority OP8 geographic focus; (ii) exploring assumptions; (iii) framing a hypothesis; and (iv) assessing evidence within a feedback process that incorporates rapid cycle of learning through small grants. In keeping with the principles of adaptive management and SGP M&E Strategy, over the course of OP8, SGP country teams will need to:

- *Monitor* how the landscape is progressing toward the desired outcomes (goals), and
- *Adapt* the management strategy to reflect changes in the OP8 landscape/seascape and in the needs of the people who live there.

In order to monitor and adapt, each participating SGP country programme must report on OP8 indicators agreed with the GEF Secretariat as part of the GEF8 replenishment, and updated SGP M&E Strategy. Through COMDEKS, SGP and partners have developed a set of indicators of



social and ecological resilience of production landscapes/seascapes ([SEPLS](#)) that have been applied and tested in COMDEKS project sites, whilst the Global ICCA Support Initiative is also developing the [ICCA Security Index](#) and data submission manual developed by UNEP WCMC as a tracking tools for protected and conserved areas governed and managed by indigenous peoples and local communities (IPs and LCs).

## 8. Annexes: resource materials

- [International Waters](#): aligning with Strategic Action Plans (SAPs) and Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) specific examples include: South China Sea IW model working with SAPs; communities' contribution to global learning via [IW: LEARN](#); ecosystem-based multi-focal area IW approach.
- Aligning with frameworks for globally significant biodiversity and ecosystems including inter alia [WWF eco-regions](#), [Ramsar Sites](#), [UNESCO World Heritages](#), [Key Biodiversity Areas](#), and/or [biodiversity hotspots](#) identified by Conservation International and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund ([CEPF](#)).
- Use data planning layers made available by the [UN Biodiversity Lab](#) established as a partnership platform between UNDP and UN Environment (including 15 technical partners and data providers) to provide high quality data for government representatives to take action for sustainable development.
- [COMPACT](#) (Community Management of Protected Areas Conservation) 2000 to 2014 Specific examples include: COMPACT Belize Barrier Reef seascape conservation, Mt Kenya, Sian Ka'an. A compilation of [case-studies](#) on COMPACT highlights this experience from different countries where SGP implemented the approach.
- [COMDEKS](#) Phase 1 and 2 (Community Development and Knowledge Management for *Satoyama* Initiative) 2010 to 2015. The main objective of the COMDEKS initiative is to develop sound biodiversity management and sustainable livelihood activities in socio-ecological production landscapes (SEPLS) to maintain, rebuild, and revitalize landscapes, in accordance with the perspectives of the *Satoyama* Initiative. Key publications: [Phase 1](#); [Phase 2](#); [Resilience Indicators](#).
- Existing SGP CPS land/seascape examples and OP5/OP6/OP7 Upgrading countries Specific examples include the territorial planning approached adopted by SGP Ecuador as part of the OP5 and OP6 Full-Size project using the [ART GOLD methodology](#) line with the National Constitution of the country which seeks to promote indigenous well-being.
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) [Aichi 2020 framework](#) including the Programme of Work on Protected Areas ([PoWPA](#)), the IUCN 'Promise of Sydney' resulting from the 2014 IUCN World Parks Congress ([WPC](#)), as well as emerging priority on "other effective area-based conservation measures" ([OECMs](#)) agreed at the CBD COP14 (Nov 2018), and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework ([GBF](#)).